

Message Text

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ORIGIN SAB-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 /008 R

66619

DRAFTED BY S/AB:JKARINSHAK

APPROVED BY S/AB:JKARINSHAK

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R 152051Z JAN 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 009811

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

THE FOLLOWING IS A REPEAT OF TEL AVIV 0281 ACTION
SECSTATE INFO AMMAN BEIRUT CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA
JERUSALEM LONDON 14 JANUARY 1975. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0281

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PINT,IS

SUBJ: THE RABIN GOVERNMENT-FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ISRAELI
POLITICAL SCENE

1. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARIZATION OF MAIN POINTS IN OUR A-
009 " THE RABIN GOVERNMENT--FOREIGN POLICY AND THE
ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE."

2. FOR THE RABIN GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL HONEYMOON HAS ALREADY
BEEN OVER FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. NEW GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN
JUNE 1974 IN THE AFTERMATH OF A BRUISING INTERNAL POLITICAL UPHEAVAL
TRIGGERED BY THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR. OUTGOING MEIR GOVERNMENT LEFT
BEHIND POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS WITH
EGYPT AND SYRIA, BUT ALSO CONGERIES OF UNRESOLVED POLITICAL,
MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. INEVITABLY, FLEDGLING GOVERNMENT'S
POPULARITY HAS ERODED SOMEWHAT AS HIGH POPULAR EXPECTATIONS
FOR FRESH APPROACHES AND STRONG LEADERSHIP HAVE BEEN LEFT UNFULFILLED.

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CONTINUED HIGH INFLATION COMBINED WITH INCREASING CONCERN OVER A POSSIBLE ECONOMIC DOWN-TURN COULD ERODE THIS SUPPORT FURTHER.

3. NONETHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT SURVIVAL PROSPECTS OF RABIN'S 66-MEMBER COALITION (LABOR ALIGNMENT, NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY AND INDEPENDENT LIBERALS) REMAIN REASONABLY GOOD. WHILE PART OF ISRAELI PUBLIC HAS CALLED FOR A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT, RABIN SO FAR HAS SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED THESE PRESSURES BY STRESSING THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF LABOR PARTY AND LIKUD VIEWS ON ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AND CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE AND CLOS US-ISRAEL RELATIONS.

4. RABIN'S ABILITY TO RESIST THESE PRESSURES IN 1975 WILL DEPEND ON A) EVOLUTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS, PARTICULARLY NEXT STAGE WITH EGYPT, B) PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF ISREL-US RELATIONS, FOCUSED ON ITHE ISSUE OF US "PRESSURE" AFFECTING ISRAEL'S " VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS," C) PROSPECTS OF WAR OR PEACE, D) TERRORISM AND THE IDF RESPONSE, AND E) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS. DETERIORATION IN ISRAEL'S POLITICAL OR MILITARY ,SITUATION COULD BE THE CATALYST, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY SO, FOR FORMATION OF NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. ON OTHER HAND, CONCLUSION OF SECOND STAGE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT ON ACCEPTABLE TERMS WOULD GREATLY STRENGTHEN RABIN'S DOMESTIC POSITION.

5. RABIN'S STRATEGY, IN OUR JUDGMENT, IS TO MAINTAIN HIS PRESENT COALITION WITHOUT GOING TO AN ELECTION IN 1975 (NEXT SCHEDULED ELECTI ON IS ONLY IN DECEMBER 1977) AND TO BLOCK THOSE GROUPS URGING A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. THIS WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL MANEUVERING THROUGH SHOALS OF ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICS, REINFORCEING HIS INATE CAUTION IN ADHERING TO MAIN FOREIGN POLICY GUIDELINES OF THE MEIR GOVERNMENT. RABIN'S FREEDOM OF INITIATIVE IS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY FACTIONAL INFIGHTIN G WITH LABOR PARTY, ANXIETIES OF ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION, VIEWS OF THE OLD GUARD--MRS MEIR, DAYAN, SAPIR AND EBAN, AND ATTACKS OF OPPOSITION LIKUD AND SOMETIMES OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY. THESE FACTORS PARTICULARLY WILL LIMIT GOI'S ABILITY TO RECONSIDER ITS POLICY TOWARD WEST BAND AND PALESTINIAN ISSUES, WHICH REMAIN MOST POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE AND INFLAMMATORY PROBLEMS CONFRONTING ISRAEL.

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6. RABIN'S GREATEST ADVANTAGE AT PRESENT IS ABSENCE OF ANY STRONG CHALLENGER FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP. SOME ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT DAYAN IS PREPARING A COMEBACK, BUT WE STILL DOUBT THAT HE WOULD TRY TO BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT (BY BREAKING FROM LABOR PARTY AND JOINING FORCES WITH LIKUD). PERES APPARENTLY HAS ASPIRATIONS BUT IS PORRLY PLACED IN MINORITY FACTION OF LABOR PARTY AND DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENTLY LARGE POPULAR FOLLWING.

MOREOVER, LIKUD HAS PROVEN UNABLE TO CONVINCE THE ISRAELI PUBLIC THAT IT CONSTITUTES AN ALTERNATIVE AND NOT JUST AN OPPOSITION.

7. IN SUM, STRUCTURAL CONTINUITY OF ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICS HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY THE CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP CARRIED OUT IN 1974

.
LABOR PARTY REMAINS THE DOMINANT FORCE, AND INTERACTION OF ITS THREE FACTIONS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO DETERMINE CONTENT OF FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY. AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE PARTY SPLITS OR NEW ALLIANCES IN 1975. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE RULED OUT, IT DEPENDS MORE ON DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO ISRAEL'S FOREIGN POLICY THAN ON ANY CHANGE WITHIN DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRUCTURE ITSELF.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE009811
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JKARINSHAK
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750016-0802
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750149/aaaabqvt.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SAB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE RABIN GOVERNMENT-FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE
TAGS: PINT, IS
To: PANAMA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006